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SERBSKI  
PESME



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**SERBSKI PESME;**

**OR,**

**NATIONAL SONGS OF SERVIA.**

LONDON : PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET.

SERBSKI PESME; -

OR,

National Songs of Serbia.

BY

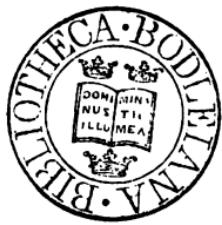
OWEN MEREDITH.

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1861.

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TO  
CHAUNCY HARE TOWNSHEND,

IN MEMORY OF DAYS ON LEMAN,  
DAYS BY HIM ENDEARED TO MEMORY,

This Book  
IS  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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IN the following Poems no attempt has been made at accurate verbal translation from the original language. They cannot, indeed, be called translations in the strict sense of the word. What they are, let the reader decide. What they are meant to be, is nothing more than a rude medium through which to convey to other minds something of the impression made upon my own by the poetry of a people amongst whom literature is yet unborn ; who in the nineteenth century retain, with the traditions, many also of the habits and customs, of a barbarous age ; and whose social life represents the struggle of centuries to maintain, under the code of Mahomet, the creed of Christ. It is indeed this strange intermixture of Mahometan with Christian associations

which gives to the poetry of the Serbs its most striking characteristic. It is the sword of a Crusader in the scabbard of a Turk. That, however, which mainly distinguishes this from all other contemporary poetry with which I am acquainted, is the evidence borne on the face of it of an origin, not in the heads of a few, but in the hearts of all. This is a poetry of which the People is the Poet. The "People," not as representing, in contradistinction to all other constituent parts of a community, that class which lies broadly at the basis of a civilization culminating through many social ranks and orders in a high degree of refinement; but "the People," as expressive of one great nationality, which, however geographically subdivided, is yet in that rude and elementary social condition which consists but of a single class, and admits but one aspect of life, one mode of thought, one series of sensations, one train of association. And as is the people, so is the poetry. It is inferior to the poetry of the Persians, inasmuch as it is less intellectual, has less fancy, less

wisdom, less art. It is destitute of whatever indicates individual thought or personal observation of life. It has nothing of the graceful fancy which glitters through the Gulistan, and never rises to such sweet and noble tones as those which render harmonious some portions of the Shah Nameh. Here we shall find no trace of that gracious chivalry which Ferdousi, perhaps, bequeathed to Ariosto, and assuredly none of that shrewd and somewhat sad experience of mankind which followed, among the roses of his immortal Garden, Sadi, "the wanderer of the world." But such merits are perhaps incompatible with the poetry in what, of the Serbs, is most remarkable,—I mean, that spontaneity and unity, that evidence of collective inspiration, which has never survived the childhood of a people. Such flowers as grow here may be merely mountain weeds, but the dew of the morning is on them.

There is a period in the early life of every people, before man has been divided into men, when the many are still the one. Special and particular sources of in-

Interest are as yet neither sought nor discovered. Popular sympathy exists only for subjects of general history or universal experience ; and in regard to these all men feel the same feeling and think the same thought. The individual mind lies yet unformed in the matrix of the general life, and the only individual is the Race. Even the gods belong to it. Whoever, then, is the first to speak aloud, has the advantage of speaking for all. He expresses not only his own, but every man's sensations and experience. It follows that there is between the fact and the word a directness, closeness, and simplicity of connection which cannot afterwards be realized. For, of all things in nature, the first description is likely to be the best, because it is the most obvious, and therefore the most generally true. The earth is black, the grass is green, the heaven is high, the sea is deep. To say more about them is, in reality, to say less of them. For, as we cannot extend or vary the Universal, every word added to that which expresses the permanent and general quality of a thing can only relate to what is

partial and particular; and, therefore, less valuable. But so inherent to the thing spoken of is the attribute first selected to qualify it, that by the process of universal usage the epithet is soon absorbed back into the noun. The words "deep sea" and "black earth" imperceptibly cease to express anything more than "the sea" and "the earth;" and the modern poet, in order to refresh the sense of perception, is constrained to designate these things anew by some epithet which, in proportion as it is original, expresses only a limited and special experience. It is this primitive *universality* which gives to the poetry of the Serbs its freshness and its force. Adopting a word now generally admitted into our vocabulary from the German, I would describe it as especially "objective." The smallest Servian song is therefore rather dramatic than lyrical. For the lyrical poet necessarily expresses a subjective state of mind, and the shallow critic who accuses him of egotism is simply accusing him of being a lyric poet.

It is so impossible to separate the Servian poetry

from the Servian people, and so difficult to form any judgment of the former without reference to the latter, that I entreat the reader's sufferance to say a few words about the Serbs, preliminary to his perusal of this attempted reproduction of some of their songs. Those who edit other men's poems are wont to affix to the poetry an introductory notice of the author. I claim a very brief use of this privilege; for the Servian people is the author of the Servian poetry.

This people, a branch of the old Slavonic family, descended in the seventh century from the Krapak mountains, and established themselves, under permission of the Emperor Heracleus, in Mesia Superiora. Until 923, Servia formed a small state, with its kings and history but little known. At that epoch it was conquered by the Bulgarians, and soon passed, with them, under the dominion of the Greek emperors. In the twelfth century, the Serbs, taking advantage of the weakness of the Lower Empire, rendered themselves independent under Tchoudomil, and founded an em-

pire which, in the fourteenth century, became very powerful under Douchan the Magnanimous, who assumed the title of tzar or emperor.

This empire included a portion of Thrace and Macedonia, and many towns in Thessaly and Albania. Under the reign of Ouroch the First the power of it declined; and at the battle of Kossovo (15th June, 1389), Lazarus, the last Servian Knès, was destroyed, with his army, by the Sultan Amurath the First. After this fatal day Servia ceased to be a nation. The name of it was effaced from the map of Europe, and the country portioned out into various pachaliks, of which the principal was that of Belgrade, then called the Sandgaciat of Semendria. From this epoch the Serbs remained for four hundred years victims of an oppression so unspeakably bitter that it would be difficult to convey to the mind of a modern European any idea of the intolerable nature of it. Thus subjected to a domination brutal and sanguinary in the extreme, at a period when, throughout Europe, arts,

letters, and commerce were on the decline, the people soon lost every vestige of an imperfect civilization. From discouragement they sunk into degradation ; the degradation of a people which has ceased to hope. To escape as much as might be from the sight of their oppressors, they abandoned their towns, and dwelt concealed among the woods and mountains, where they bred and tended swine.

At this day the results of prolonged oppression are unhappily to be traced throughout Servia in all that debases the character, and contracts the self-development of a people. That universal worship of the lie which is the creed of the slave, that predisposition to frantic ferocity which is the reaction from suppressed and impotent hatred — insincerity and servility, cunning and cruelty—these are at once the defects of the Servian character, and the results of the Turkish rule. The demoralization of the people is sadly to be seen in their poetry. It extols, as a public virtue, treachery to the public foe, mistakes trickery for

\*

strategy, falsehood for finesse, cruelty for valour, and admits into the character of a hero every vice save that of physical cowardice.

In the war declared by Josef II. against the Porte, the Serbs took arms with the Austrians. Accustomed, during that brief period, to the enjoyment of comparative independence, they resolved, after the peace of Sistov, not lightly to part with the blessing of it. About a tenth part of the population withdrew armed, in little bands, into their forests and mountains. These little armed companies, leading amongst their natural mountain fastnesses a marauding migratory life, partly of a predatory, partly of a political character, called themselves Haidouks, or Bandits; and form a social phenomenon not very dissimilar to that represented by the banditti of Marco Sciarra in the forests around mediæval Rome. It is but a very few years since the Haidouk has ceased to be a prominent social feature in Servia. He is a principal personage in the poetry of the people, and Monsieur Dozon, to whose

able and interesting little work upon the poetry of the Serbs I am largely indebted,\* relates that he was informed by a late Minister of the Interior in Servia, that in certain portions of the principality it had been found necessary to prohibit the recitation of the popular songs about the Haidouks, as numbers of those who listened to them had been incited to adopt the lawless life therein described.

The revolt of the Serbs under Kara-George (or Black George), and the disastrous result of it, are well known. It was reserved for the present Prince of Servia, Milosch Obrenovitch, to achieve the administrative independence of the Principality.†

\* Those who may feel interested to know more of the heroic *peesmas*, will find in this work a faithful though slightly abbreviated prose translation of them, together with an excellent criticism on the poetry of the Serbs, from which I have herein adopted many statements entirely confirmed by my own experience in the country.

† Since these words were written, that extraordinary man has terminated a life perhaps unparalleled both in the duration, and the activity, of it. He is succeeded by his son Prince Michael.

The Servian Pesmas, which are the work of centuries, and which, more than anything else perhaps, have served to keep alive in the people the sentiment of nationality, and to unite in a common animosity to the Turk all the kindred branches of the great Slave race in the East—may, all of them, be said to be lyrical, in so far as they are all of them made to be sung or recited to the *gouslē*, a rude musical instrument, with a single string, played on by a bow. But I have already observed that none of them possess those qualities which belong to what we now call lyric poetry. They may be classified under two heads—the heroic pesmas, relating to historical events and characters; and the domestic, or songs sung by the women—of an erotic or fantastic character. Of the former, I have given but a single specimen: that which relates the battle of Kossovo, an event which was to the Serbs what the battle of Ceuta was to the Spaniards, of Hastings to the Saxons, and of Mohacs to the Magyars; for I must avow that the greater

number of these heroic *pesmas* abound in the description of atrocities which would be sickening to an English reader. They are, however (some of them), so deeply tintured with a kind of terror unlike that suggested by any poetry which is known to me, that I greatly regret having been unable to reproduce them in some form which, whilst excluding revolting details, might have still preserved the inspiration of terror.

It is but a very few years since the poetry of the Serbs was first reduced to writing. I believe that M. Vouk Stefanovitch Karadjitch was the first to rescue these *pesmas* from that state of oral tradition in which they had existed for ages. Like the Greek rhapsodies, they are composed and sung about the land, from village to village, by blind beggars. The poets of Servia are the blind; and surely there is something touching in this common consecration of the imaginary world as an hereditary possession to those from whose sense this visible world is darkened. The traveller, or the huntsman reposing from the chase, in some

wild wayside *méhana* or tavern (a mere mud cabin on the windy mountain side, and generally near a mountain spring), as, followed by his dogs, he seats himself upon the bench by the ingle, may yet see, amid a group of eager weather-beaten faces, the blind bard with his hollow, wooden *gouslē*, covered with sheepskin, and traversed by a single string. This instrument is placed upon the knee, and played like a violoncello. First a series of long wailing notes commands the attention of the audience; then a pause, through which you hear the harsh grating of the *gouslē* string; and then forth roll the long monotonous verses of the pesma, of which **Marko Kralievitch** is probably the hero; a sort of burly brawling Viking of the land, with just a touch in his composition of Roland and the Cid, but with much more about him of Gargantua.

I have already noticed the primitive simplicity of the Servian Pesmas. Amongst other causes, two chiefly have no doubt combined to preserve this in its original purity—one, the mountain life, and the social

isolation which has for centuries withdrawn the Serbs from the influence of any foreign history, religion, or mythology;\* and the other, the fact that the Turk, unlike European conquerors, has ever contented himself with superimposing on the conquered the authority of Islam, without any attempt to assimilate to himself the annexed population, either as regards language or legislation.

Another fact remains to be noticed in connection with the poetry of the Serbs. This is the almost entire absence of the mythic element. Nothing like the mysticism of the early Teutonic literature, the fairy fantasies of the Persian, or the weird cosmogony of the Scandinavian Eddas, is to be found in these *pesmas*. This, I suppose, must be attributed to the character of the Slavonic race. Neither is any trace to be found in their poetry of superstitions which are

\* It is indeed singular that, considering the relations once existing between Montenegro and the Republics of Venice and Ragusa, the national poetry of these mountaineers should have been so little influenced from abroad.

to this day dominant amongst the people themselves, such as the vampire and the witch. One striking exception, however, to this general rejection of the mystical exists in the frequent introduction of the *vila* as a supernatural agent. Here is, perhaps, the fragment of an unconjectured myth. These strange and solemn beings, whose vague and varying forms have not yet been defined, even by the imagination,—rarely seen, but often making heard, from the mountain and the wild, their voice of prophecy and of warning,—menacing and sometimes deadly to man when he invades their mighty solitudes, yet gifted with beneficent powers and healing arts, are they not, perhaps, symbols of forces, at once terrible and salutary in nature, apparitions of her power, and echoes of her awful voice?

Of the domestic *peimas* I have given many specimens, and yet barely enough to indicate their vast variety. The sentiment of love as expressed in these songs is not (it will be remarked) that tender metaphysical motion of the soul which belongs to the North, and is

perhaps the growth of a high civilization. It is rather a fierce, quick, meridional passion, the eager, instinctive, *mi piace* of the South, sensual but natural, and not without grace and delicacy.

What is most remarkable in these songs is their essentially dramatic character. Either they represent, in short close dialogue, a particular "situation," or they treat a particular phase of a particular sentiment or passion; or else they relate in rapid narrative a particular event, commencing, without preamble, where the action commences, and terminating, without reflection or remark, where the action terminates. Another peculiarity is a certain playful slyness, which hardly amounts to humour, but is like the sport of an infant savage. They also abound in what appears, if I may say so, a sort of *naïve* cynicism—the cynicism, not of embittered experience, but of childish incapacity for deep or earnest thought. The propensity to personify all things, and the familiar intercourse indicated in these pesmas, as existing between man and all natural

objects, whether animate or inanimate, affords obvious proof of those primitive conditions of society to which I have already alluded.

The Servian metres are unrhymed, and trochaic or dactyllic in character. They consist of verses varying from three to seventeen syllables in length. Here is a specimen—

Oblák sě viyě | pōvědrōm nēbū.

“*The cloud floats in the pure ether.*”

It is an interesting and suggestive fact that the natural quantity of the syllables is modified, in poetry, to suit the necessities of the metre. The following words, for instance, if pronounced without reference to prosody, would be thus accentuated—

I pōněsě | trī trōvěrā blāgă.

But when sung to the *gouslē* as a verse, they are to be scanned thus—

I pōnēsě | trī trōvārā blāgă.

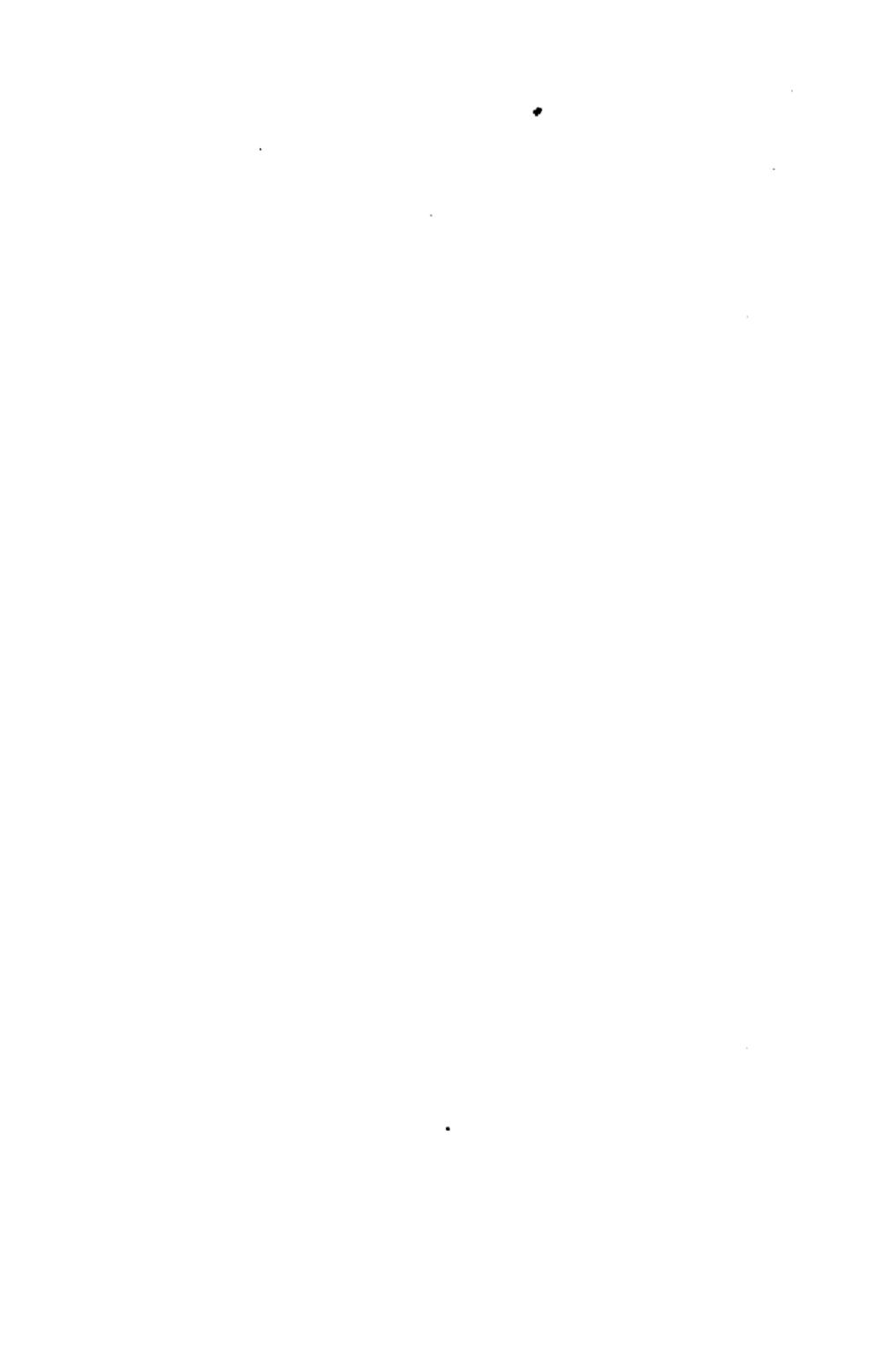
May not this throw a ray of light on the unelucidated question of Greek accent and quantity ?

But I have said enough. I will only add of the contents of this little volume that, whether they be weeds or wild flowers, I have at least gathered them on their native soil, amidst the solitudes of the Carpathians, and along the shores of the Danube.

THE  
BATTLE OF KOSSOVO.

---

HEROIC PESMA.



# SERBSKI PESME.

---

## THE BATTLE OF KOSVOVO.\*

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### I.

THE Sultan Murad o'er Kosovo comes  
With banners and drums.

There, all in characters fair, (*a*)  
He wrote a letter ; and there  
Bade his estaffettes despatch  
To bear it to Krouchevatch,  
To the white-wall'd town of the Tzar,  
To the hands of Prince Lazar.

\* See Introduction.

“ Listen, Lazarus, (b) chief of the Serbs, to me !  
That which never hath been, that which never shall be,  
Is that two lords one land should sway,  
And the same rayas two tributes pay.  
Send to me, therefore, the tributes and keys ;  
The golden keys of each white town ;  
And send me a seven years’ tribute with these.  
But if this thou wilt not do,  
Then come thou down over Kossovo :  
On the field of Kossovo come thou down,  
That we may divide the land with our swords.  
These are my words.”

When Lazarus this letter had read,  
Bitter, bitter were the tears he shed.

## II.

A grey bird, a falcon, comes flying apace  
From Jerusalem, from the Holy Place ;  
And he bears a light swallow abroad.  
It is not a grey bird, a falcon, God wot !  
But the Saint Elias ; and it is not  
A light swallow he bears from afar,  
But a letter from the Mother of God  
To the Tzar who in Kosovo stays.  
And the letter is dropt on the knees of the Tzar ;  
And these are the words that it says :—

“ Lazarus, Prince of a race that I love,  
Which empire choosest thou ?  
That of the heaven above ?  
Or that of the earth below ?  
If thou choose thee an earthly realm,  
Saddle horse, belt, spur, and away !  
Warriors, bind ye both sabre and helm,  
And rush on the Turks, and they

With their army whole shall perish.  
But, if rather a heavenly crown thou cherish,  
At Kossovo build ye a temple fair.  
There no foundations of marble lay,  
But only silk of the scarlet dye.  
Range ye the army in battle array,  
And let each and all full solemnly  
Partake of the blessed sacrament there.  
For then of a certainty know  
Ye shall utterly perish, both thou,  
And thine army all ; and the Turk shall be  
Lord of the land that is under thee."

When the Tzar he read these words,  
His thoughts were as long and as sharp as swords.  
" God of my fathers, what shall I choose ?  
If a heavenly empire, then must I lose  
All that is dearest to me upon earth ;  
But if that the heavenly here I refuse,  
What then is the earthly worth ?  
It is but a day,  
It passeth away,

And the glory of earth full soon is o'er,  
And the glory of God is more and more."

"What is this world's renown ?"

(His heart was heavy, his soul was stirr'd.)

"Shall an earthly empire be preferr'd  
To an everlasting crown ?

At Kosovo build me a temple fair :

Lay no foundations of marble down,  
But only silk of the scarlet dye."

Then he sent for the Servian Patriarch :  
With him twelve bishops to Kosovo went.

It was at the lifting of the dark :

They ranged the army in battle array,  
And the army all full solemnly  
Received the blessed sacrament,  
And hardly was this done, when lo !  
The Turks came rushing on Kosovo.

## III.

Ivan Kossantchitch, my pobratime, (c)  
What of the Turk? How deem ye of him?  
Is he strong, is he many, is he near?  
Our battle, say! may we show him?  
May we hope to overthrow him?  
What news of him bringest thou here?

And Ivan Kossantchitch replied:  
“ Milosch Obilitch, my brother dear,  
I have lookt on the Turk in his pride.  
He is strong, he is many, he is near,  
His tents are on every side.  
Were we all of us hewn into morsels, and salted,  
Hardly, I think, should we salt him his meat.  
Two whole days have I journeyed, nor halted,  
Toward the Turk, near the Turk, round him, and never  
Could I number his numbers, or measure his end.  
From Erable to Sazlia, brother, my feet  
Have wander'd; from Sazlia round by the river,

Where the river comes round to the bridge with a bend ;  
And over the bridge to the town of Zvétchan ;  
From Zvétchan to Tchéchan, and further, and ever  
Further, and over the mountains, wherever  
Foot may fall, or eye may scan,  
I saw nought but the Mussulman.

“ Eastward and westward, and southward and nor’ward,  
Scaling the hillside, and scathing the gorse,  
Horseman to horseman, and horse against horse ;  
Lances like forests when forests are black ;  
Standards like clouds flying backward and forward,  
White tents like snowdrifts piled up at the back.  
The rain may, in torrents, fall down out of heaven, (*d*)  
But never the earth will it reach :  
Nothing but horsemen, nothing but horses,  
Thick as the sands which the wild river courses  
Leave, after tempest, in heaps on the beach.  
Murad, for pasture, hath given  
To his horsemen the plain of Mazguite.  
Lances a-ripple all over the land,  
Tost like the bearded and billowy wheat

By the winds of the mountain driven  
Under the mountain slab.  
Murad looks down in command  
Over Sitnitza and Lab."

" Answer me, Ivan, answer ye me,  
Where may the tent of Murad be ?  
His milk-white tent, may one see it afar  
O'er the plain, from the mountain, or out of the wood ?  
For I have sworn to the Prince Lazar  
A solemn vow upon Holy Rood,  
To bring him the head of the Turkish Tzar,  
And set my feet in his infidel blood."

" Art mad, my pobratime, art mad ?  
Where may the tent be, the tent of Murad ?  
In the midst of a million eyes and ears :  
In the midst of a million swords and spears,  
In the heart of the camp of the Turk.  
Fatal thy vow is, and wild is the work ;  
For hadst thou the wings of the falcon, to fly  
Fleeter than lightning, along the deep sky,

The wings of the falcon, though fleet be they,  
Would never bear thee thy body away."

And Milosch abjured him : " O Ivan, my brother,  
(Tho' not by the blood, yet more dear than all other,)  
See thou say nothing of this to our lord,  
Lest ye sorrow his heart ; and say never a word,  
Lest our friends be afflicted, and fail. But thou  
Shalt rather answer to who would know,  
And boldly aver to the Tzar,  
' The Turk is many, but more are we,  
And easy and light is the victory :  
For he is not an army of men of war,  
But a rabble rather  
Of rascals that gather  
To the promise of plunder from places afar ;  
Priests and pedlars,  
Jugglers and fiddlers,  
Dancers and drummers,  
Varlets and mummers,  
Boys and buffoons—all craven loons  
That never in burly of battle have bled,

Never have combated sword in hand ;  
They are only come, the beggars, for bread,  
And to feed on the fat of the land.  
And the dreadful dismal dysentery  
Is among their men, and their horses die,  
Of a daily increasing malady.' "

## IV.

Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, our Tzar, (*e*)  
At Krouchevatch high Slava doth hold.  
Around him, sitting by cups of gold,  
His sons and his seigneurs are.

To right, the reverend Youg Bogdan ; (*f*)  
Round whom the nine young Yougovitch ;  
To left, that thrice-accursèd man,  
The traitor black, Vouk Brankovitch ;  
And many a lord, along the board,  
And last of all, in the knightly train,  
Milosch, the manly Voïvod ;

Next him, Servian Voïvodes twain,  
Ivan Kossantchitch, his brother in God,  
And Milan Toplitz, a man without stain.

And the Tzar bade pour the purple wine,  
And, brimming up his golden cup,  
Lookt all adown that lordly line.

“ To whom shall the King first pledge ? ” he began,  
“ If first to age, this health should be,  
To no man do I drink but thee,  
Revered old Youg Bogdan ;  
But if to rank or high degree,  
Vouk Brankovitch, I drink to thee. (g)  
If to friendship be the toast,  
My brothers nine, I know not which  
Amongst you all I love the most,  
You gallant-hearted Yougovitch !  
If to beauty, then be thine,  
Ivan, first the flowing wine.  
If to length and strength of limb,  
Then the wine to Milan brim,

No man measures height with him.  
If to valour, more than even  
Stature, beauty, friendship, age,  
Our first honours should be given,  
Then to Milosch must we pledge.  
Yet, be that as it may be,  
Milosch, I drink to none but thee !  
Milosch, thy health !  
Drink, man, drink !  
Why should any man care to think ?  
Traitor or true, or friend or foe,  
To thee I drain this goblet low ;  
And, ere to-morrow, at Kossovo,  
Thou thy master hast betray'd  
To the Turk, for wages paid,  
(Friend or foe, whate'er befal,  
True or traitor, what care I ?)  
The King drinks to thee in his hall,  
Lip to lip, and eye to eye,  
Pledge me now in sight of all ;  
And, since to thee I fill it up,  
Take thou too this golden cup,

And add it to ill-gotten wealth—  
Milosch, thy health!"

Lightly Milosch bounded up,  
Lightly caught the golden cup,  
To the black earth bow'd his head,  
And "Noble master, thanks!" he said,  
"For the pledge thou pledgest me,  
And thanks that, of thy courtesy,  
Thou to me dost first allot,  
A true, true health, O King, to thee,  
To pledge back in this golden token;  
Thanks for this, my lord, but not  
For the words which thou hast spoken.  
For, oh! (and may my loyalty,  
Dear liege, not fatal prove to me,  
Before the truth is judged between  
Us, and this fair company!)  
My true heart is sound and clean,  
Traitor never have I been,  
Traitor never will I be!  
But at Kossovo to-morrow morn

I trust, as I am a living man,  
A soldier and a Christian,  
To go to the death for the true, true faith,  
True to the last where my faith is sworn,  
Careless of calumny, scorning scorn !  
  
The traitor is sitting by thy side,  
He toucheth thy robe, thy wine he drinketh,  
To God and his king he hath foully lied,  
Vouk Brankovitch, the servile-eyed,  
Christian false, and perjured friend !  
  
God judge between us twain i' the end,  
And perish he in the thought he thinketh !  
To-morrow a noble day will be,  
For at Kossovo all men shall see  
What is the truth betwixt us two,  
And who is traitor, and who is true.  
  
For I swear by the great sun in the sky,  
And I swear by the living God on high  
That judgeth us all, whate'er befall,  
When at Kossovo upon battle plain,  
Murad, the Turk, I have sought and slain  
(Sought and slain, for I swore by the rood

To set my feet in his Turkish blood),  
If God but grant me safe and sane  
A living man to come again  
Back to white-wall'd Krouchevatch,  
And there that traitor foul I catch,  
Vouk Brankovitch, I will have by the throat.  
All men shall see it, and all men shall note,  
For it shall be done in the light of the sun.  
To my good war-lance I will fix his skull,  
As a woman fixes a ball of wool  
To her distaff when her spinning is done.  
Then I will bear him to Kossovo,  
Bear him back to the battle plain ;  
All men shall see it, and all men shall know  
Who is the traitor of us twain."

## V.

At the royal board a noble pair  
Sit together, and full sad they are.  
Lazarus and his Militza fair,  
The sweet-eyed Tzarina and the Tzar.  
Troubled is the Tzar's broad brow,  
The Tzarina's eyes are dim,  
And, with tears that dare not flow,  
The Tzarina says to him :—

“ Lord Lazarus, O golden crown  
Of Servia, and sweetheart my own !  
To-morrow morn to Kossovo  
With thee to the battle go  
Servitors and Voïvodes.  
I alone, in these abodes,  
Vacant of thy voice, remain ;  
Hearing, haply, on the wind,  
Murmurs of the battle plain ;  
Heavy of heart, and sad of mind,  
Silent in sorrow, alone with pain.

O think on this, my life, my lord,  
Never a soul to carry a word  
To Kosovo, from me to thee,  
To Krouchevatch from thee to me ;  
Wherefore, lord, of my brothers nine,  
The sons of Youg, our father old,  
(Golden stars in a crown of gold !)  
Let one, for once, be wholly mine.  
Mine to witness the tears I weep ;  
Mine to solace the vigil I keep ;  
Mine alone, of my nine brothers,  
To pray with me for those eight others ;  
Of brothers nine, but leave me one  
To swear by when the rest be gone !” (h)

And Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, replied :  
“ Militza, sweetheart, wife true-eyed,  
Of thy nine brothers, tell to me which  
Thou lovest best, that he should rest  
In our white palace to watch by thee.  
Which of them, sweetheart ?—tell to me !”  
And she answer’d, “ Bocko Yougovitch.”

And Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, replied :  
“ Militza, sweetheart, wife true-eyed,  
To-morrow, when from her red bower  
The watery dawn begins to break,  
Ere yet the sun hath felt his power  
Seek thou the city walls, and take  
Thy post against the Eastern gate :  
There shalt thou see the army pass,  
To mantle the field in martial state,  
And trample the dew-drop out of the grass.  
All lusty warriors, leal and true,  
Who in battle have never turn’d their backs,  
In complete steel, with curtle axe ;  
Each spearman true, as his own true steel.  
And, foremost of all, that, with iron heel,  
Crush the wet violet down in the moss,  
With purple plumes, in vesture rich,  
Thy brother, Bocko Yougovitch,  
Bearing the standard of the Cross.  
Seize thou the golden bridle-ring,  
Greet him fair from his lord the king,  
And bid him that he the standard yield

To whomsoever he deemeth best,  
And turn about from the battle field,  
In our white palace with thee to rest."

## VI.

Now, when the dawn from her red bower  
Upclomb the chilly skies, and, all  
Athwart the freshening city tower,  
The silent light began to fall  
About the breezy yellow flower  
That shook on the shadowy city wall,  
Militza, through the glimmering streets,  
Goes forth against the Eastern gate.  
There, all i' the morning light, she meets  
The army on to the distant down,  
Winding out of the dusky town,  
To mantle the field in martial state,  
And trample the dew-drop out of the grass.  
O brothers, a goodly sight it was !  
With curtle axe, in complete steel,  
So many a warrior, lusty and leal,

So many a spearman, stout and true,  
Marching to battle in order due.  
And foremost among that stately throng,  
With, over his helmet's golden boss,  
Floating plumes of the purple rich,  
The gallant Bocko Yougovitch  
Bearing the standard of the Cross.  
All blazing gold his corselet beam'd,  
Imperial purple fold on fold,  
The mighty Christian ensign stream'd  
Over his red-roan courser bold ;  
And high upon the standard top  
Against the merry morning gleam'd  
An apple wrought of purest gold ;  
Thereon the great gold cross, from which,  
All glittering downward, drop by drop,  
Great golden acorns, lightly hung,  
Over his shining shoulder flung  
Flashes of light o'er Yougovitch.

She caught the bridle ring : in check  
The red-roan courser paw'd the ground.

About her brother's bended neck  
Her milk-white arm she softly wound,  
And half in hope, and half in fear,  
She whisper'd in the young man's ear :—  
“ Brother, my liege and thine, the king,  
Commits me to thy comforting.  
  
He greets thee fair, and bids me say  
(The which with all my heart I pray)  
That thou the royal ensign yield  
To whomsoever thou deemest best,  
And turn about from the battle field  
At Krouchevatch with me to rest,  
That of nine brothers I may have one  
To swear by when the rest be gone.”

But “ Foul befal,” the young man said,  
“ The man that turns his horse's head,  
Whoe'er he be, from battle plain :  
Turn thee, sister, turn again  
To thy white tower ! I will not yield  
The Holy Cross 'tis mine to bear,  
Nor turn about from the battle field.

Not, though the king should give, I swear,  
The whole of Krouchevatch to me,  
Would I turn thitherwards with thee.  
To-day will be the noblest day  
Yon sun in heaven did ever see ;  
Nor shall my own true comrades say  
This day, in sorrow or scorn, of me,  
—‘ The craven heart that dared not go  
To the great fight at Kossovo ;  
That fear’d to find a saintly death,  
Nor pour’d his blood for Holy Rood,  
Nor fell for the Christian faith.’ ”  
He prickt his horse toward the gate,  
And, thro’ a cloud of hoary mist  
Glittering like one great amethyst,  
Swept forth into the morning wan.  
Then up there rides in royal state,  
With his seven sons, old Youg Bogdan.  
She stopt them one by one ; she took  
The bridle rein ; she spoke to them all.  
Not one of them all would turn and look :  
Not one of them all would listen and wait ;

But the trumpet sounded in the gate,  
And they follow'd the trumpet call.

And after these, a little space,  
Voïn Yougovitch not far  
She spied come riding at slow pace,  
Leading the destriers of the Tzar, (*i*)  
All trapt and housed with gold be they,  
And going an amble by the way.  
His good steed was of dapple grey.  
She caught the bridle ring : in check  
The good grey courser paw'd the ground.  
Her milk-white arm she softly wound  
About her brother's bended neck ;  
And half in hope, and half in fear,  
She whisper'd in the young man's ear :—  
“ Brother, my liege and thine, the king,  
Commits me to thy comforting.  
He greets thee fair, and bids me say  
(The which with all my heart I pray)  
That thou the royal destriers yield  
To whomsoever thou deemest best,

And turn about from the battle field  
In Krouchevatch with me to rest,  
That of nine brothers I may have one  
To swear by when the rest be gone."

But "Sister, foul befal," he said,  
"The man that turns his horse's head,  
Whoe'er he be, from battle plain :  
Turn thee, sister, turn again  
To thy white tower ! I will not yield  
The destriers of my lord the Tzar,  
Nor turn about from the battle field,  
Where all my noble kinsmen are,  
Albeit to meet my death I go  
To the great fight at Kossovo ;  
To pour my blood for Holy Rood,  
To fight to the death for the Christian Faith,  
With my kinsmen all to fight and fall,  
With our foreheads against the foe."

Through the gate he prickt his steed,  
And off to the dreary downs afar,

Leading as fast as he might lead  
The destriers of the Tzar.  
But Dame Militza, when no more  
She heard the echoing hoofs that bore  
Her brother from her, even as one  
From whom the light of life is gone,  
Fell swooning on the cold curb-stone.

Then came the Tzar himself anon,  
And his great war-horse pacing on,  
Did stoutly neigh in lusty pride ;  
But when he past beside that stone,  
He stopt, and stoopt, and swerv'd aside.  
There, all her fair white length o'erthrown,  
The Tzar his own true wife espied,  
And fast the bitter tears down ran,  
As he call'd to his servant, Gouloban.

“ Good Gouloban, my faithful friend,  
In this thy trusty service prove ;  
From off thy milk-white horse descend,  
And, as thou dost thy master love,

In thy true arms thy mistress take,  
With whom to her tall tower go ;  
And, God forgive thee for my sake,  
But go not thou to Kosovo.  
I will requite thee when again  
I meet thee, if I be not slain,  
Howbeit, I deem my doom at hand,  
For the Turk is lord of half the land.”

Down stept the trusty serving man,  
Full fast his bitter tears down ran,  
And sad was the heart of Gouloban.  
He lifted up that drooping flower,  
Lifted her on to his milk-white steed,  
And rode with her to her tall tower,  
As fast as he might speed.

There laid he her in linen bed,  
And lowly laid her lovely head.  
But o'er the airy morning smote,  
Along the blowing breeze remote,  
A solitary trumpet note.

Full well the milk-white war-horse knew  
The music of that martial sound,  
And in the courtyard paw'd the ground,  
And blithely from his nostrils blew  
The morning mist. Then Goulaban  
Adown the turret stairway ran,  
He leapt to stirrup, he leapt to selle.  
From fleeting hands he waved farewell ;  
Again he heard the trumpet blow,  
And he rode back to Kossovo.

## VII.

All when the misty morn was low,  
And the rain was raining heavily  
Two ravens came from Kossovo,  
Flying along a lurid sky : (*k*)  
One after one, they perched upon  
The palace of the great Lazar,  
And sat upon the turret wall.  
One 'gan croak, and one 'gan call,

“ Is this the palace of the Tzar ?  
And is there never a soul inside ?”

Was never a soul within the hall,  
To answer to the ravens' call,  
Save Militza. She espied  
The two black birds on the turret wall,  
That all in the wind and rain did croak,  
And thus the ravens she bespoke :  
“ In God's great name, black ravens, say,  
Whence came ye on the wind to-day ?  
Is it from the plain of Kossovo ?  
Hath the bloody battle broke ?  
Saw ye the two armies there ?  
Have they met ? And, friend or foe,  
Which hath vanquisht ? How do they fare ?”

And the two black fowls replied :  
“ In God's great name, Militza, dame,  
From Kossovo at dawn we came.  
A bloody battle we espied :  
We saw the two great armies there,

They have met, and ill they fare.  
Fallen, fallen, fallen are  
The Turkish and the Christian Tzar.  
Of the Turks is nothing left ;  
Of the Serbs a remnant rests,  
Hackt and hewn, carved and cleft,  
Broken shields, and bloody breasts.”  
And lo ! while yet the ravens spoke,  
Up came the servant, Miloutine :  
And he held his right hand, cleft  
By a ghastly sabre stroke,  
Bruis’d and bloody, in his left ;  
Gasht with gashes seventeen  
Yawn’d his body where he stood,  
And his horse was dripping blood.

“O sorrow, sorrow, bitter woe  
And sorrow, Miloutine ! ” she said ;  
“For now I know my lord is dead.  
For, were he living, well I know,  
Thou hadst not left at Kosovo  
Thy lord forsaken to the foe.”

And Miloutine spake, breathing hard :  
“ Get me from horse : on cool greensward  
Lay me, lay me, mistress mine :  
A little water from the well  
To bathe my wounds in water cold,  
For they are deep and manifold ;  
And touch my lip with rosy wine,  
That I may speak before I die.  
I would not die before I tell  
The tale of how they fought and fell.”  
She got him from his bloody steed,  
And wiped the death-drops from his brow,  
And in the fresh grass laid him low ;  
And washt his wounds in water cold,  
For they were deep and manifold ;  
Full ghastly did they gape and bleed :  
She stanch'd them with her garment's fold,  
And lightly held his body up,  
And bathed his lips with rosy wine,  
And all the while her tears down ran,  
And dropt into the golden cup ;  
And still she question'd of the war :

"O tell me, tell me, Miloutine,  
Where fell the glorious Prince Lazar ?  
Where are fallen my brothers nine ?  
Where my father, Youg Bogdan ?  
Where Milosch, where Vouk Brankovitch ?  
And where Strahinia Banovitch ?"

Then when the servant, Miloutine,  
Three draughts had drain'd of rosy wine,  
Although his eyes were waxing dim,  
A little strength came back to him.  
He stood up on his feet, and, pale  
And ghastly, thus began the tale :

"They will never return again,  
Never return ! ye shall see them no more ;  
Nor ever meet them within the door,  
Nor hold their hands. Their hands are cold,  
Their bodies bleach in bloody mould.  
They are slain ! all of them slain !  
And the maidens shall mourn, and the mothers deplore,  
Heaps of dead heroes on battle plain.

Where they fell, there they remain,  
Corpses stiff in their gore.  
But their glory shall never grow old.  
Fallen, fallen, in mighty war,  
Fallen, fighting about the Tzar,  
Fallen, where fell our lord Lazar !  
Never more be there voice of cheer !  
Never more be there song or dance !  
Muffled be moon and star !  
For broken now is the lance,  
Shiver'd both shield and spear,  
And shatter'd the scimitar.  
And cleft is the golden crown,  
And the sun of Servia is down,  
O'erthrown, o'erthrown, o'erthrown,  
The roof and top of our renown,  
Dead is the great Lazar !

“ Have ye seen when the howling storm-wind takes  
The topmost pine on a hoary rock,  
Tugs at it, and tears, and shakes, and breaks,  
And tumbles it into the ocean ?

So when this bloody day began,—  
In the roaring battle's opening shock,  
Down went the grey-hair'd Youg Bogdan.  
And following him, the noblest man  
That ever wore the silver crown  
Of age, grown grey in old renown,  
One after one, and side by side  
Fighting, thy nine brothers died :  
Each by other, brother brother  
Following, till death took them all.  
But of these nine the last to fall  
Was Bocko. Him, myself, I saw,  
Three awful hours—a sight of awe,  
Here, and there, and everywhere,  
And all at once, made manifest,  
Like a wild meteor in a troubled air,  
Whose motion never may be guest.  
For over all the lurid rack  
Of smoking battle, blazed and burn'd,  
And stream'd and flasht,  
Like flame before the wind upturn'd  
The great imperial ensign splasht

With blood of Turks : where'er he dasht  
Amongst their bruised battalions, I  
Saw them before him reel and fly :  
As when a falcon from on high,  
Pounce on a settle-down of doves,  
That murmurs make in myrrhy groves,  
Comes flying all across the sky,  
And scatters them with instant fright ;  
So flew the Turks to left and right,  
Broken before him. Milosch fell,  
Pursued by myriads down the dell,  
Upon Sitnitz'a rushy brink,  
Whose chilly waves will roll, I think,  
So long as time itself doth roll,  
Red with remorse that they roll o'er him.  
Christ have mercy on his soul,  
And blessed be the womb that bore him.  
Not alone he fell. Before him  
Twelve thousand Turkish soldiers fell,  
Slaughter'd in the savage dell.  
His right hand was wet and red  
With the blood that he had shed,

And in that red right hand he had  
(Shorn from the shoulder sharp) the head  
Of the Turkish Tzar, Murad.

“ There resteth to Servia a glory,  
A glory that shall not grow old ;  
There remaineth to Servia a story,  
A tale to be chanted and told !  
They are gone to their graves grim and gory,  
The beautiful, brave, and bold ;  
But out of the darkness and desolation,  
Of the mourning heart of a widow'd nation,  
Their memory waketh an exultation !  
Yea, so long as a babe shall be born,  
Or there resteth a man in the land—  
So long as a blade of corn  
Shall be reapt by a human hand—  
So long as the grass shall grow  
On the mighty plain of Kossovo—  
So long, so long, even so,  
Shall the glory of those remain  
Who this day in battle were slain.

“ And as for what ye inquire  
Of Vouk,—when the worm and mole  
Are at work on his bones, may his soul  
Eternally singe in hell-fire !  
Curst be the womb that bore him !  
Curst be his father before him !  
Curst be the race and the name of him !  
And foul as his sin be the fame of him !  
For blacker traitor never drew sword—  
False to his faith, to his land, to his lord !  
And doubt ye, doubt ye, the tale I tell ?  
Ask of the dead, for the dead know well ;  
Let them answer ye, each from his mouldy bed,  
For there is no falsehood among the dead :  
And there be twelve thousand dead men know,  
Who betray’d the Tzar at Kossovo.”

## NOTES.

(a) The word is *sitni*, “fine, slender, elaborate.” This, in Servian poetry, is the epithet invariably applied to hand-writing ; and the deference and wonder with which the writing of a letter, or the use of pen, ink, and paper, in any shape, is alluded to throughout the poetry of the Serbs, sufficiently indicates an elementary and barbarous condition of social life.

(b) Lazarus Grebleanovitch is sometimes called Tzar, sometimes knès or prince. But he was consecrated Tzar in 1376.

(c) The word *Pobratime* (from *brat*, “brother”) denotes a relationship (independent of blood or kindred) between persons of the same sex, which is peculiar to the Serbs. For in the Bulgarian the word signifies nothing more than friend. But in Servia it constitutes a relationship voluntarily contracted, but so close as to be incompatible with marriage between the one Pobratime and the sister of the other (*see* note to page 124). In the ancient Servian liturgies are to be found prayers applicable to the consecration of this relationship by the priest. It is

a sort of freemasonry, and obliges those who have contracted it to succour each other in danger or sickness. Appeal in such cases, the usual form of which it is held impious to reject, and which, in the Serb poetry, is sometimes placed in the mouth even of Turks and Vilas, is "*Bogom bratá* (or *sestra*) *i soetim Jovanom*," "My brother, or sister, in God and Saint John."

(d) The whole of this passage is quite oriental in the hyperbolical character of the similes it piles together. Strange, that Marlowe, in (perhaps his greatest) play of "Tamburlaine," should have placed in the mouth of an Oriental monarch very similar language :

(*King of Moroco, loquitur*) :

"*The spring is hinder'd by your smothering host ;*  
*For neither rain can fall upon the earth,*  
*Nor sun reflex his virtuous beams thereon,*  
*The ground is mantled with such multitudes.*"

Was it by intuition ? But Marlowe himself rivals the orientals in gigantesque exaggeration and supercilious indifference to simplicity.

(e) The *slava* (literally "glory") is a very ancient custom peculiar to the Serbs, and still honoured in the observance. Every family, or tribe (rather in the sense of the Roman *gens*), independently of the patron saints particular to each of its individual members, has a patron common to them all, as Saint Dimitri, Saint Nicholas, Saint Elias, &c. ; who is, on periodical occasions, celebrated with certain ceremonies of a convivial kind, beginning in solemn libation to some sacred toast, and

ending in general intoxication. These ceremonies are called *slaviti slavou*, and the toasts *zradavita*. It is the popular belief that the celebrated Servian hero, Marko Kralievitch, annually returns to life on the 5th of May, and holds, in the church of Prilip, the Slava of St. George.

(f) All these personages are historical, and figure in the Pesmas which refer to the great battle of Kossovo. Youg Bogdan (*youg*, "South") was the father-in-law of Lazarus, and Governor of Acarnania and Macedonia. Yougovitch, the sons of Youg—*vitch*, or *vitz*, always implying "son of"—as Alexander Karageorgiovitz, son of Kara-George; Milosch Obrenovitz, son of Obren, the last and present Prince of Servia.

(g) Vouk Brankovitch, a son-in-law of Lazarus. A circumstance similar to that which forms the main plot of the Niebelungen, namely, a quarrel between the wives of the two men, is supposed to have led to that deadly hatred between Vouk and Milosch Obilitch, which ultimately brought about the defection of the one and the death of the other. Of the estimation in which the memory of this personage is held amongst the Serbs and other Slavic races, judge from the following passage in the Code of Montenegro, dated 1803 :

"And if, from this day henceforth, any Montenegrin should be found capable of betraying his country, we devote him, beforehand, to the eternal malediction reserved for Judas, who betrayed the Lord God, and the infamous Vouk Brankovitch, who betrayed the Serbs at Kossovo, and thus forfeited the divine mercy."

(h) The affection between brother and sister, or brother and brother, would appear to be held among the Serbs as more sacred than that arising out of any other relationship. Ironical comparison frequently occurs throughout the Servian poetry between the affection of wife to husband, and of sister to brother, not to the advantage of the former. Consequently the oath sworn "by a brother" is especially sacred, and not to have "a brother to swear by" is held to be a family disgrace. The whole poem of "Predag and Nenad" (which I have not translated) is founded on this sense of humiliation, involved in the fact of not having a brother to swear by.

(i) For the use of this word, destriers, I plead the authority of Chaucer.

"And, for he was a knight auntrous.  
 He n'oldë sleepen in none hous,  
 But liggen in his hood,  
 His brightë helm was his avenger,  
 And by him baited his destrer,  
 Of herbës fine and good."

*Rime of Sir Thopas.*

(k) In the Servian poetry, ravens are the invariable bearers of ill tidings.

**POPULAR OR DOMESTIC  
PESMAS.**



## I.

## THE STAG AND THE VILA.

O'ER the mountain, the wild stag browses the mountain  
 herbage alone,  
 At morn he browses, at noon he sickens, at eve he  
 maketh moan.  
 From the rifts of the rocky quarries the Vila\* hears  
 him, and calls,

\* The Vilas are supernatural beings that appear frequently in the poetry, and exist to this day in the popular superstition, of the Serbs. I have been unable to trace their origin, but they would seem to be a remnant of the early Slave mythology; and, being a mountain race, to have survived the fate of the lowland members of the fairy family, notwithstanding the presence of perhaps almost as many "holy freres" as those to whose "*blessing of thorpes and dairies*," Chaucer, in his day, attributed the fact that "*there bin no faëries*." They are a kind of fierce Oreads, dwelling among the mountains and forests, and sometimes about the margin of waste waters. Their attributes are varying, and not distinctly ascertainable, but they are mostly terrible, and hostile to man. They are not, however, incapable

“O beast of the mountain meadows, the woods, and  
the waterfalls,  
What sorrow is thine, so great that, browsing at morn,  
at noon thou ailest,

---

of sympathy with the human race ; for they have been known (though generally after being vanquished by them) to love great heroes. Evidence of this is to be found in the recorded exploits of Marko Kralievitch. That hero was beloved by one of these beings, who, indeed, prophesied his death, and that of his horse, Charatz. This animal was aged above one hundred and fifty years at the period of his death, and, according to some authorities, was the gift of a Vila. The love of these beings, however, is generally treacherous, and often fatal. The Vilas are not immortal, nor invulnerable. The Vila Ravioëla, who wounded the voivode Milosch with a golden arrow, was nearly massacred by Marko. They preserve, however, through incalculable time, supernatural youth and beauty. They believe in God and Saint John, and abhor the Turks. When they appear to mortal eyes it is as

“ Unwedded maids,  
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows  
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love,”

with long hair floating over their shoulders, and clothed in snow-white vesture. They are wise in the use of herbs and simples, they know the properties of every flower and berry, and possess strange medical arts.

And now to the stars thou art moaning ? What is it  
that thou bewailest ?"

And the stag to the Vila makes answer, mournfully  
moaning low :

"O queen of the mountain, my sister ! I mourn for my  
lost white doe,

My milk-white doe, my darling ! from me, o'er the  
mountain track,

She wander'd away to the fountain ; she wander'd, she  
never came back.

Either forlornly she wanders, mourning me, missing  
her way,

Or the hunters have follow'd and found her, and she  
hath perisht their prey,

Or else she forgets me, the faithless thing ! and ever  
by valley and crag

Strays wanton after a belling note, and follows another  
stag.

If she be lost in the lonesome places, and hollows  
under the moon,

I pray that God, of his goodness, will guide her back  
to me soon.

If the hunters have slain my beloved one, wandering  
the woodland alone,  
I pray that God, of his justice, will send them a fate  
like my own ;  
But if she follows another stag, caring no more to come  
back,  
I pray that God, in his vengeance, guide the hunter  
fleet on her track."

## II.

## LOVE AND SLEEP.

I walkt the high and hollow wood, from dawn to  
even-dew,

The wild-eyed wood stared on me, and unclaspt, and  
let me through,

Where mountain pines, like great black birds, stood  
percht against the blue.

Not a whisper heaved the woven woof of those warm  
trees :

All the little leaves lay flat, unmoved of bird or breeze :  
Day was losing light all round, by indolent degrees.

Underneath the brooding branches, all in holy shade,  
Unseen hands of mountain things a mossy couch had  
made :

There asleep among pale flowers my beloved was laid.

Slipping down, a sunbeam bathed her brows with  
bounteous gold,

Unmoved upon her maiden breast her heavy hair was  
roll'd,

Her smile was silent as the smile on corpses three  
hours old.

“O God!” I thought, “if this be death, that makes  
not sound nor stir!”

My heart stood still with tender awe, I dared not  
waken her,

But to the dear God, in the sky, this prayer I did  
prefer :

“Grant, dear Lord, in the blessed sky, a warm wind  
from the sea,

To shake a leaf down on my love from yonder leafy  
tree ;

That she may open her sweet eyes, and haply look on  
me.”

The dear God, from the distant sea, a little wind  
releast,

It shook a leaflet from the tree, and laid it on her  
breast.

Her sweet eyes ope'd, and looked on me. How can I  
tell the rest?

## III.

## TITTLE-TATTLE.

Two lovers kist in the meadow green,  
They thought there was none to espy :  
But the meadow green told what it had seen  
To the white flock wandering by.  
The white flock told it the shepherd :  
The shepherd the traveller from far :  
The traveller told it the mariner,  
Watching the pilot star :  
The mariner told it his little bark :  
The little bark told it the sea :  
The sea told it the river,  
Flowing down by the lea :  
The river told it the maiden's mother,  
And so to the maid it came back :  
The maiden, as soon as she heard it,  
Curst them all for a tell-tale pack :

“ Meadow, be barren for ever,  
Grass, grow not henceforth from the mould of thee !  
Flock, be devour’d by the wolf !  
Shepherd, the Turk seize hold of thee !  
Traveller, rot of the fever !  
Mariner, drown in the gulf !  
Bark, may the whirlwind perplex thee,  
And break thee against the shore !  
Sea, may the moon ever vex thee !  
River, be dry evermore !”

## IV.

## MATRIMONIAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Where mountains shut the silence up, a milk-white maiden stood :

Her face was like a light, and kindled all the solitude.  
And, while the wild white mountain flowers turned passionately pale,

And while the chilly water ran reluctant to the vale,  
And the bald eagle, near the sun, stood still on some tall peak,

That milk-white maiden to her own sweet face began to speak :

“ O face, sweet source of all my care,  
Fair face (because I know thee fair !)  
If I knew thou should’st be kist  
By any husband, wither’d, old, and grey,  
I would wander, mist-like, with the mist,

The monstrous mountain many a league away,  
Until, in some abandon'd place,  
Where the starved wolf cracks the bones  
Of perisht men, and the wind groans  
For want of something to devour,  
I should find, wild in the wind,  
Among the blotcht and mildew'd stones,  
The harsh-blowing absinth flower ;  
And pluck the stubborn root of it,  
That from the bitter fruit of it  
I might the blighting juice express ;  
Therewith to bathe thee, O my face, my face !  
Till all thy beauty should be bitterness,  
And each unloved caress  
Burn on the old man's lip, which should embrace  
Death on thy rosy portals, O my face !

“ But if I knew, O my face, my face !  
That thy lips should be kist by whom I would list,  
I would glide, unespied, to a place, my face,  
Where red roses, I know, ripely ripple and blow,  
And white lilies grow more snowy than snow ;

And all in the balmy evening light,  
While the dew is new, and the stars but a few,  
The roses so red, and the lilies so white,  
I would pluck, with the sunset upon them, and press  
From those flowers their sweetest sweetesses,  
To embalm thee, my face, till what he should embrace  
Should be fairer than lilies and richer than roses ;  
So that when on thy lips my belov'd one reposes,  
A thousand summers of fragrant sighs  
Might fan the faint fire of his soul's desire  
With raptures pure as the rivers that rise  
Among the valleys of Paradise.”

## V.

## LOVE CONFERS NOBILITY.

*He.* Violet,\* little one mine !

I would love thee, but thou art so small.

*She.* Love me, my love, from those heights of thine,  
And I shall grow tall, so tall !  
The pearl is small, but it hangs above  
A royal brow, and a kingly mind :  
The quail is little, little my love,  
But she leaves the hunter behind.

\* Violet is a pet name, as well as a proper name.

## VI.

## A SOUL'S SWEETNESS.

*He.* O maiden of my soul !

What odour from the orange hast thou stole,  
That breathes about thy breast with such sweet  
power ?

What sweetness, unto me  
More sweet than amber honey to the bee  
That builds i' the oaken bole,  
And sucks the essential summer of the year  
To store with sweetest sweets her hollow tower ?  
Or is it breath of basil, maiden dear ?  
Or of the immortal flower ?

*She.* By the sweet heavens, young lover !

No odour from the orange have I stole ;  
Nor have I robb'd for thee,  
Dearest, the amber dower

Of the building bee,  
From any hollow tower  
In oaken bole :  
But if, on this poor breast thou dost discover  
Fragrance of such sweet power,  
Trust me, O my belovèd and my lover,  
'Tis not of basil, nor the immortal flower,  
But from a virgin soul.

## VII.

## REMINISCENCES.

*He.* And art thou wed, my Belovèd ?  
My Belovèd of long ago !

*She.* I am wed, my Belovèd. And I have given  
A child to this world of woe.  
And the name I have given my child is thine :  
So that, when I call to me my little one,  
The heaviness of this heart of mine  
For a little while may be gone.  
For I say not . . . ‘Hither, hither, my son ! ’  
But . . . ‘Hither, my Love, my Belovèd ! ’

## VIII.

## SLEEP AND DEATH.

The morning is growing : the cocks are crowing :  
Let me away, love, away !

'Tis not the morning light ;  
Only the moonbeam white.  
Stay, my white lamb, stay,  
And sleep on my bosom, sleep !

The breeze is blowing : the cattle are lowing :  
Let me away, love, away !

'Tis not the cattle there ;  
Only the call to prayer.  
Stay, my white lamb, stay,  
And sleep on my bosom, sleep !

The Turks are warning to the mosk : 'tis morning !  
Let me away, love, away !

'Tis not the Turks, sweet soul !  
Only the wolves that howl.  
Stay, my white lamb, stay,  
And sleep on my bosom, sleep !  
The white roofs are gleaming : the glad children  
screaming :  
Let me away, love, away !

'Tis the night-clouds that gleam :  
The night winds that scream.  
Stay, my white lamb, stay,  
And sleep on my bosom, sleep !

My mother in the gateway calls to me . . . "Come  
straightway ! "

And I must away, love, away !

Thy mother's in her bed,  
Dumb, holy, and dead.  
Stay, my white lamb, stay,  
And sleep on my bosom, sleep !

## IX.

## A CONJUGAL DISPUTE.

All at the mid of the night, there arose  
A quarrel 'twixt husband and wife ;  
For, the young Omer Bey and his spouse,  
Falling into discussion and strife,  
Wild words to each other they said,  
Side by side, at the dead  
Of the night, on their marriage bed.

Had it been about anything less  
The quarrel might have passt by ;  
But it was not a trifle, you guess,  
That set words running so high.  
Yet the cause in dispute (to be brief)  
Was only a white handkerchief,  
Broider'd all over with gold,

And scented with rose and with amber,  
So sweet the whole house could not hold  
That scent from the nuptial chamber.  
For (the whole truth herewith to disclose),  
This handkerchief border'd with gold,  
And scented with amber and rose,  
Had been given to the Bey (to enfold  
Her letters, which lay on his breast),  
By the mistress that he loved best.  
But his wife had a sensitive nose  
For the scent of amber and rose ;  
And the fiend himself only knows  
Whether, but for a lie, ere the close  
Of that quarrel there had not been blows.

“ You know I’ve a sister, my treasure,  
The wife of our friend Zekir Bey ;  
I love her, you know, beyond measure,  
And she, dear, on our bridal day,  
To me gave this white handkerchief,  
Border’d all over with gold,  
And scented with amber and rose ;

Which precious, for her sake, I hold,  
Though the scent of it, much to my grief,  
Has troubled our nuptial repose."

Smiling, her husband she heard,  
Feeling no faith in his word,  
For troubled his face was, she saw.  
Up she leapt by the light of the taper,  
Barefooted, and seized ink and paper ;  
And wrote to her sister-in-law :—

" Wife of our friend, Zekir Bey,  
Long live thy husband, nought ail him,  
May'st thou never have cause to bewail him !  
Speak truth, and fear nothing. But say  
(For truly the truth must be told)  
To thy brother, on our bridal day,  
Did'st thou give a white handkerchief, brightly  
Embroidered all over with gold,  
And scented with rose and with amber  
So sweet, that the scent of it nightly  
May be smelt in the Bey's bridal chamber ?"

When this came to the wife of the Bey,  
She burst into tears, as she read :  
And " Pity upon me !" she said,  
" For I know not, alas ! what to say.  
If I speak truth, I put strife  
'Twixt the brother I love and his wife ;  
If I speak false, much I dread  
Lest my husband die for it," she said.

Then the letter she laid in her breast,  
And she ponder'd with many a sigh,  
" I choose of two evils the least,  
If my husband must die, let him die !  
Since the choice lies 'twixt one or the other—  
Any husband a woman may spare,  
But the sister that injures a brother  
Does that which she cannot repair."

Thus shrewdly the matter she saw :  
And she wrote to her sister-in-law :—

" Wife of my brother, the Bey !

POPULAR OR DOMESTIC.

My husband is well. May naught ail him !  
And I trust I shall never bewail him.  
To my brother on your marriage day  
(And truly the truth shall be told)  
I gave a white handkerchief brightly  
Embroidered all over with gold,  
And scented with rose and with amber  
So sweet, that the scent (as you say,  
And as I cannot doubt of it) nightly  
May be smelt in the Bey's bridal chamber."

## X.

## DEGREES OF AFFECTION.

Up and down the Tchardak,\* underneath the blossom'd  
    roof,  
Musing, young Iövo,† at midnoon, walkt all aloof.  
Suddenly the Tchardak broke beneath him : slipping  
    through  
The rotten plank, he fell, and his right arm was snapt  
    in two.  
Straight, a leech he sought him. Evil leech, in truth,  
    he found.  
Save the mountain Vila, none had skill to heal the  
    wound :  
But the Vila claim'd in price of service, ere the cure  
    began,

\* A sort of gallery or verandah, running round a house. Also, sometimes, a pavilion, summer-house, or granary.

† Diminutive for Iovan or John.

The right hand of the mother of the maim'd and  
mangled man ;

The long hair of his sister with the riband in the hair ;  
And the white pearl necklace which his wife was wont  
to wear.

The mother gave her right hand, and the sister gave  
her curls ;

But the wife refused her necklace . . . "I? I will not  
give my pearls !

Each is perfect, each is precious, nowhere else is such  
a set.

'Twas my dowry from my father, and I mean to wear  
it yet."

This the Vila of the mountain heard ; and, anger'd in  
her mood,

She dropt a little purple drop of poison in the food  
Of young Lövo, and he died.

Then, for the murder'd man,  
Those three women to lament, in funeral dole began.  
One there was that, deeply mourning, evermore did  
grieve :

One that miss'd and mourn'd for him at morning and  
at eve :

One that mourn'd him now and then, with eyes a little  
dim,

And looks a little changed, whenever she remember'd  
him.

She whose sorrow ceased not, mourning more than any  
other,

Missing aye her murder'd son, was young Lövo's  
mother :

She that mourn'd at morning, and at evening mourn'd,  
and miss'd her

Brother, when day came or went, was young Lövo's  
sister.

She that mourn'd him now and then, when sometimes  
in her life

Old memories fill'd vacant hours, was young Lövo's  
wife.

## XI.

## THE FAIR IKONIA.

The fair Ikonia boasted at the bath,  
Gaily, amidst the matrons . . . “Tell me which  
Amongst you, matrons, such a husband hath  
As mine, Lövo Morniakovitch ?  
Where he goeth, there I go :  
Where he resteth, there rest I :  
Is he silent, then I know  
That he names me silently :  
Does he speak ? of me he speaketh :  
Does he dream ? of me he dreameth :  
Does he wake ? for me he waketh :  
Mine by night, when moonlight beameth !  
Mine at dawn, when daylight breaketh !  
First from dreams of me to wake,  
That his kiss may ope my eyes :  
*‘Dear, the dawn begins to break,*  
*Light of my life, arise ! arise !’*

Life is long, the journey through it  
Lone and weary, others tell.  
I shall never turn and miss him  
From my side, and this is well.”  
This the wily widow, Anna,  
Heard, and slyly slipt away:  
Then she clothed herself with splendour ;  
And she stood, in rich array,  
Where, from the Bazar, Iövo  
Came home, singing all the way :  
Deckt her cheeks with painted roses,  
Darker dyed her midnight hair,  
Breath’d the breath of perfumed posies,  
Laid her bounteous bosom bare,  
Stood like glory in the gateway,  
Murmur’d, mild as evening air,

“ Sad, Iövo, seems thy case,  
Wedded to a barren wife ;  
If thou would’st not see thy race  
Pass and perish, with thy life,  
Wed with me, and I will bear thee

Every year a noble heir,  
Every year a gracious infant,  
With strong hands and golden hair."\*

Long he listen'd : soft her voice was ;  
Long he lookt : her dark eyes glisten'd.  
As the counsel, so the choice was.  
All too long he lookt and listen'd.  
Thus the wily widow, Anna,  
Won Iövo then and there :  
And each year a boy she bore him  
With strong hands and golden hair.  
Silent walkt the fair Ikonia,  
Making neither moan nor word,  
Up the great Bazar walkt silent,  
And she bought herself a cord :

In the garden square a golden  
Orange-tree grows all alone,

\* The epithet "golden" generally implies "strength" in the Serb poetry. The words are literally "with golden hands," &c.

There her silken cord she fasten'd,  
And she hang'd herself thereon.

Came one running to Iövo,  
“ On thy golden orange-tree,  
Fair Ikonia, dead, is hanging.”

“ Hanging ? Let her hang !” quoth he,  
“ I've a fairer far than she.”

## XII.

## A WISH.

I would I were a rivulet,  
And I know where I would run !  
To Save, the chilly river,  
Where the market boats pass on ;  
To see my dear one stand  
By the rudder ; and whether the rose  
Which, at parting, I put in his hand,  
Warm with a kiss in it, blows ;  
Whether it blows or withers :  
I pluckt it on Saturday ;  
I gave it to him on Sunday ;  
On Monday he went away.

## XIII.

## IMPERFECTION.

All in the spring,  
When little birds sing,  
And flowers do talk  
From stalk to stalk ;  
Whispering to a silver shower,  
A violet did boast to be  
Of every flower the fairest flower  
That blows by lawn or lea.  
But a rose that blew thereby  
Answer'd her reproachfully,  
(All in the spring,  
When little birds sing,  
And flowers do talk  
From stalk to stalk) :  
“ Violet, I marvel me  
Of fairest flowers by lawn or lea  
The fairest thou should'st boast to be ;

For one small defect I spy,  
Should make thee speak more modestly :  
Thy face is fashion'd tenderly,  
But then it hangs awry."

## XIV.

## EMANCIPATION.

The Day of Saint George ! and a girl pray'd thus :  
“ O Day of Saint George, when again to us  
Thou returnest, and they carouse  
Here in my mother's house,  
May'st thou find me either a corpse or a bride,  
Either buried or wed ;  
Rather married than dead ;  
But however that may betide,  
And whether a corpse or a spouse,  
No more in my mother's house.”

## XV.

THE VOICE OF NATURE ; OR, WHAT THE FISH SAID TO  
THE MAIDEN.

By the sea a maiden is sitting,  
And she says to herself at her knitting :

“ O my heart ! what more deep than the ocean,  
Or more wide than the plain, can be ?  
Or more swift than the horse in his motion ?  
Or more sweet than the food of the bee ?  
Or more dear than a brother ? ”

And a fish from the sea replies :

“ O maiden, but little wise !  
The plain is less wide than the sea,  
And the heaven more deep than this is ;  
Eyes swifter than horses be ;  
And honey less sweet than kisses ;  
And a lover more dear than all other.”

## XVI.

## THE MALADY OF MOÖ.

Moö, the Tzarovitch (bolder is no man !)  
Walkt to the Bath with the Turk lords one day :  
Mahmoud the Pacha's white wife (and what woman  
Is fairer than she is ?) was walking away.  
Even as the sun, o'er the ardours of even,  
Looks on the moon, and the moon on the sun,  
Wistfully, each, disunited in heaven,  
Soon to be pacing far pathways alone,  
So through the mist of a moment of ecstacy,  
Thrill'd with a rapture delicious and dim,  
Mute on the pale Pachinitza the Tzarovitch  
Gazed, and the pale Pachinitza on him.  
Moö walkt silently back to his palace :  
Troubled his heart was, and changed was his mood.  
Straightway he sicken'd of love, and lay dying,  
Dying of love for the wife of Mahmoud.

Ladies the loveliest all came to visit him :  
Only the wife of Mahmoud stay'd away.  
Then the Sultana rose up and wrote to her—  
“Wouldst thou be greater than all of us, say ?  
Moïo is lying upon his couch dying ;  
Sore is his sickness, and fatal they say :  
Ladies the loveliest all come to visit him,  
Thou, art thou more, Pachinitza, than they ?”  
She, when she heard of it, loopt up her white sleeve,  
Loopt up her light robe as white as a star ;  
Presents she bore for him, worthy a monarch's son,  
Figs from the sea-coast, and grapes from Mostar.  
Lightly she trod o'er the long golden gallery,  
Past all ungreeted the corridor dim,  
Pale, the dumb purple pavilion she enter'd,  
Where the Sultana was watching by him.  
Softly she sat by his bed-side, and softly  
Wiped from his forehead the fever, and said,  
“This is a malady known to me surely !  
Long did I watch, and long weep by the bed  
Once where my brother lay moaning and mad of it,  
Moaning and madden'd, unable to move ;

Poison they said it was. I, too, have drunk of it.  
This is the passionate poison of love."

Trembling he listen'd, as trembling she utter'd it.  
Lightly he leapt from the couch where he lay,  
Fasten'd, behind her, the long golden gallery,  
Laught as he sank on her soft lips, and they  
Three white days, little heeding the daylight,  
Three blue nights, little noting the moon,  
Seal'd by sweet kisses in silent caresses,  
Rested, while round them May melted to June.  
Gaily the nightingale sang in the garden.  
Love the bird sang of, and sweet was the tune.  
Three white days, little loving the daylight,  
Three blue nights, ill at rest 'neath the moon,  
Mahmoud the Pacha walkt, mourning his miss'd one,  
"Come, Pachinitza, come back to me soon!"  
Sadly the nightingale sang in his garden.  
Love the bird sang of, but harsh was the tune.  
Then, when the fourth day was low in the orient,  
Mahmoud the Pacha sat down in his hall;  
There a white letter he wrote to the Sultan:  
"Sultan Imperial, dear master of all!"

There's a white dove, with a gold treasure casket,  
Flown to thy doors from thy servant's abode.  
Send back my white dove, restore me my treasure,  
If thou hast fear of the justice of God."  
But to the Pacha the Sultan sent answer :  
" Mahmoud, my servant, behoves thee to know  
There's in my palace a falcon unhooded,  
And what he hath taken he never lets go."

## XVII,

## A SERVIAN BEAUTY.

'Tis the Kolo\* that dances before the white house,  
And 'tis Stoian's fair sister, O fair, fair is she !  
Too fair she is truly, too fair, heaven knows,  
(God forgive her !) so cruel to be.  
The fair Vila, whom the wan clouds fondly follow  
O'er the mountain wherever she roam it,  
Is not fairer nor whiter than she.  
Her long soft eyelash is the wing of the swallow  
When the dew of the dawn trembles from it,  
And as dawn-stars her blue eyes to me ;

\* *Kolo*, signifying literally a wheel, is the generic term for all the Servian national dances ; in most of which the dancers, either taking hands, or united each to each by a handkerchief tied round the waist or to the girdle, form a ring and advance or retreat to and from the centre to a monotonous music, either of the voice or some very simple wind instruments. Both sexes take part in these dances, which are frequently in the open air.

Her eyebrows so dark are the slender sea-leeches ;\*  
Her rich-bloomèd cheeks are the ripe river peaches ,  
Her teeth are white pearls from the sea ;  
Her lips are two half-open'd roses ;  
And her breath the south wind, which discloses  
The sweetness that soothes the wild bee.  
She is tall as the larch, she is slender  
As any green bough the birds move ;  
See her dance—'tis the peacock's full splendour !  
Hear her talk—'tis the coo of the dove !  
And, only but let her look tender—  
'Tis all heaven melting down from above !

\* A strange, but very frequent, simile in Servian poetry.

## XVIII.

## A DISCREET YOUNG WOMAN.

Militza has long soft eyelashes,  
So darkly-dreaming dropt on either cheek,  
You scarce can guess what little lightning flashes  
From those deep eyes, beneath them beaming, break.  
And her fair face, like a flower,  
Has such drooping ways about it,  
I have watcht her, many an hour,  
Three full years (O never doubt it !)  
And yet never have seen fairly  
Eyes or face,—reveal'd so rarely !

Only just to rob one glance  
From the happy grass beneath her,  
On the green where maidens dance  
When the month makes merry weather,  
I the Kolo call'd together,

Trusting to my happy chance.  
While the dance grew sweeter, faster,  
(Bosoms heaving, tresses shaken,)  
Suddenly with dim disaster  
All the sky was overtaken.  
Rolling darkness drown'd the sunlight,  
Rolling thunder drencht the valleys,  
And in heaven was left but one light  
From the lightning's livid sallies.

Like a necklace lightly shatter'd,  
Shedding rubies, shedding pearls,  
Here and there the Kolo scatter'd  
All its bevy of bright girls.  
Little, darling, timid creatures !  
Each, with frighten'd, flutter'd features,  
Lifted up her pretty eyes  
To the tempest growling o'er her ;  
But Militza, very wise,  
Still kept looking straight before her.

Little voices, silvery, wild,

All at once, in fretful cadence,  
Brake out chiding the sweet child.  
“ What, Militza !” cried the maidens,  
“ Those grass-grazing eyes, I wonder,  
From the ground can nothing startle ?  
Hark, child ! how it groans, the thunder !  
See ! the lightnings, how they dartle  
Here and there by angry fits,  
In and out the stormy weather !  
Hast thou wholly lost thy wits,  
Little fool ? Or must we deem  
Thou wouldest something wiser seem  
Than the whole world put together ?”

But Militza answers . . . “ Neither  
Have I lost my wits, nor grown  
Wiser, maidens, I must own,  
Than the whole world put together.  
I am not the Vila white,  
Who, amidst her mountain ranges,  
Lifting looks of stormy light,  
Through his fifty moody changes,

Woos the tempest's troubled sprite  
Down the mountain melting o'er her—  
I am not a Vila white,  
But a girl that looks before her."

## XIX.

## BOLOZÀNOVITCH, THE KNAVE.

DJOUL,\* the Turk, on a morning in May,  
When every bird is brilliant in feather,  
And every flower in blossom is gay,  
To celebrate sweetly the merry May weather,  
From dawn to dusk, in dance and play,  
Call'd a hundred matrons and maids together.  
And the fairest maiden of all, that day,  
Was the maid Bolozànovitch loved, they say.

He sought her all a summer noon,  
And on to eventide ;  
He sought her under the summer moon,  
Through all the country wide,  
Till at nightfall he came, in the mist and murk,  
To the lighted house of Djoul, the Turk.

\* For *Gul*, the Turk word, meaning *rose*.

“ Djoul, Djoul with the raven hair !  
Give me a shift of linen fair,  
Such as thyself art wont to wear  
On the day when the glad new moon is born ;  
Paint me the eyebrow with antimony ;  
These bronzèd cheeks with white and red  
Colour ; and comb me, and curl me the head ;  
Hang me over the shoulders free  
Silken tresses two or three,  
Such as by matron or maid are worn ;  
Bind me the brow with a golden braid,  
And clothe me, anon, in the clothes of a maid  
From head to foot, with many a fold  
Of the milk-white tunic flowing and full ;  
And give me a distaff of gold  
And a ball of Egyptian wool ;  
Then suffer me thus 'mid the maidens to move,  
That I may speak to the maiden I love.”

Djoul, the Turk with the raven hair,  
Laught as she listen'd, and granted his prayer.  
She clothed him in clothes of a maid,

Comb'd him and curl'd him the hair,  
Painted his dark face fair,  
Over his long limbs laid  
Many a milk-white fold  
Of vesture flowing and full ;  
Then gave him a distaff of gold,  
And a ball of Egyptian wool ;  
And when he was trickt, and pincht, and padded,  
And painted, and plaster'd, to look like a lass,  
Because he yet lookt like the knave that he was,  
This good counsel she added :

“ Bolozànovitch, knave, take note !  
When anon, 'mid our women ye stand,  
The old women take by the hand,  
And kiss on their finger tips ;  
The young women kiss on the lips ;  
But, for those that are maidens and girls,  
You shall kiss them under the throat,  
And over the collar of pearls.”

Bolozànovitch gladly (the knave !)

Gave heed to the counsel she gave,  
And of all, as she bade him, took note.  
The old women each on the finger tips  
He kist, and the young women each on the lips,  
And the maidens under the throat.

Maidenlike thus 'mid the maidens he moved,  
Drooping the eyelid over the ground ;  
But when he came to the maiden he loved,  
He made her a little red wound  
Just in the soft white fold  
Of her slender throat. Then she  
Cried out to the women around,  
“ Strike ! strike, with your distaffs of gold,  
The knave who has wounded me !  
For this was not a woman. Behold,  
'Tis the knave Bolozànovitch, he !”

**XX.\*****THE WIFE OF HASSAN AGA.**

What is it so white on the mountain green ?  
A flight of swans ? or a fall of snow ?  
The swans would have flown, and the snow would have  
been  
Melted away long ago.  
It is neither snow-fall, nor yet swan-flight,  
But the tent of Hassan Aga so white.  
Sore was the wound which in battle he got,  
His mother and sister (for these without blame

\* This poem was translated by Goethe into German, in 1789, from an Italian translation published by the Abbé Fortis in 1774 ; and was thus the first of these national songs and legends that ever passed from Servia into more civilized lands. Goethe's translation (*Klaggesang von der edeln Fraun des Asan Aga*) is unrhymed and remarkably literal.

Might do as they listed) to visit him came ;  
But his wife, for the modest-minded shame  
Of a matron chaste, could not.

Wherefore, when he had heal'd him his wound so sore,  
Anger'd he said to his faithful spouse :  
“ Meet me no more, see me no more,  
’Mid our children, within my white house.”  
He frown'd and he rode away.  
Silent with deep dismay,  
The Turkish woman wept,  
Bitterly wept at her husband's word,  
Clothed herself with sorrow, and crept  
Into her chamber, and cover'd her brows,  
When the hoof of a horse was heard  
At the door of the Aga's house.

The fair Aguinitza\* fled trembling away  
To the window, to fling herself down in her fear :  
Her two little daughters came running, and they  
Cried, “ Mother, come back, mother dear !

\* The wife of an Aga ; as *Pachinitza*, wife of a Pacha.

For it is not our father Hassan is here,  
But our uncle Pintorovitch Bey."

Back she turn'd, faltering she came,  
Weeping she fell on the breast of her brother,  
And . . . "O my brother," . . . she cried . . . "the shame,  
From her children to sever a mother!"

The Bey held silence, nor answer'd a word,  
His smile was stern but his eyes were dim,  
As he drew from his silken pouch, and laid  
In the hands of his sister, the letter which said  
That her dower to her should, in full, be restored,  
And she should return to their mother with him.\*  
  
When the fair Turk that letter had read,  
Her children she call'd to her one by one,  
She kist her two boys on the brow and cheek :  
She kist her two girls on their lips' young red ;  
But when to the little one, lying alone  
In the little cradle, she came,  
The little one smiled as he slept :

\* The writing of divorce.

Her heart began to break  
With an inward anguish of shame :  
She could neither move nor speak :  
She sat down by the cradle and wept.

Then her brother Pintorovitch Bey  
Drew softly the cradle away,  
Lifted her into the saddle behind,  
Turn'd, as he mounted, and kist her,  
And rode off to his house with his sister,  
Over the hills, in the wind.

Not long in the house of her mother  
She rested ; not even a week.  
Lovers, one after the other,  
Came riding to sue and to seek :  
For never more lovely a lady  
Breath'd beauty to trouble the land,  
And soon from Imoski the Kadi  
Came gaily to ask for her hand.

“ O spare me, O save me, my brother !  
My poor heart in sunder is reft :

My poor eyes are full of old tears :  
Let me not be the bride of another,  
For the sake of my little ones left  
For the sake of the once happy years !”

But of all this full lightly he thought,  
And he gave to the Kadi her hand :  
Then sadly the Bey she besought,  
And moaning she made her demand—  
On a fair paper, pure white,  
These words to Imoski to write :

“ *Fair greeting, in fair courtesy,*  
*From her that hath been given to thee,*  
*And courtesy to her prayer !*  
*When the noble Svats\* assembled be,*

\* The Servian ceremonial of marriage is very peculiar. On the wedding day the bridegroom proceeds to the house of the bride, accompanied by the guests, of both sexes, who attend the marriage on *his* invitation ; and who in this capacity (of guests or witnesses) are called *Svats*. He is supported by a *Koum*, or Best-man, a *Stari Svat*, or chief guest (the oldest and most honoured of the company,) who attest the marriage, and a *Dear*

*And ye come in a noble company  
From her white house to carry thy bride,  
Bring ye a long white covering fair  
To cover her eyes ; that so, when ye ride  
Beside the white house of the Aga, she  
May see not her little ones there."*

When this letter was come to the Kadi's hand,  
He assembled the noblest Svats of the land ;  
And they all in a noble company rode  
To carry the bride from her white abode.  
Gaily to seek her they started,  
And with her they gaily departed.

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(paranymph or groomsman), which latter personage may be a married man. These receive the bride from the hands of her parents, and are bound not to lose sight of her till she enters her new home. All participation in the nuptial ceremonial is interdicted by custom to the parents of the bride, who do not again behold their daughter until eight days after the marriage. A mother, indeed, cannot, compatibly with established usage, attend, or be near, her daughter in child-bed. By being groomsman or witness to a marriage, a relationship is contracted with the bride's family of a nature so close and so strict as to be deemed incompatible with marriage at any future period between the groomsman and any member of that family.

But, when they were merrily riding before  
The Aga's white house, from the window at once  
Lookt her two little daughters ; her two little sons  
Came running to her from the door,  
And . . . "Come back, mother dear, with us, come !  
For dinner is waiting at home."

Then, weeping, the twice-wedded spouse  
To the bold Stari Svat, . . . "Dear, my brother in  
God,  
For the dear love of God, pass not by this abode !  
Let the horses wait here by the house ;  
That I, ere I see them no more,  
(My dear ones, my little ones, see them no more !)  
May speak, though it be but a while."  
And the horses stopt straightway, and stood by the  
door,  
And she past through the door with a smile.  
Gay gifts to her children she gave :  
To both of her boys bold and brave  
Golden jatagans rich, and to both  
Of her girls a long tunic of cloth.

But when to the little one, lying alone  
In the cradle, she came, she laid mournfully on  
The small cradle a white orphan garment,  
A little white garment, and sigh'd,  
And turn'd from the cradle wild-eyed,  
With looks of despairing endearment.

All of this Hassan Aga espied,  
And he turn'd to his two sons, and cried,  
“ Little orphans, come here ! come to me !  
For pitiless, children, is she,  
Your mother stone-hearted, the bride ! ”

Cruel, cruel and keen was the word !  
Silent she listen'd and heard,  
Heard the harsh word that he said.  
To the black earth she bow'd her bright head :  
She had not another reply,  
Than to droop her white forehead, and die :  
For the heart of the mother was broken in twain  
For the love, and the loss, of her little ones ta'en.

## XXI.

SLEEPLESSNESS.

Sleep will not take the place of Love,  
Nor keep the place from Sorrow.  
Oh, when the long nights slowly move  
To meet a lonely morrow,  
The burthen of the broken days,  
The grief that on the bosom weighs,  
And all the heart oppresses,  
But lightly lies on restless eyes  
Love seals no more with kisses.

## XXII.

## NEGLECTED FLOWERS.

Little violet, drooping all alone, like my own  
Drooping heart, I would pluck thee ; but there's none,  
no not one !

To whom I dare to give thee : so I leave thee, and  
pass on.

I would give thee gladly, gladly, if I dared, to Ali Bey ;  
But too proud (ah well-a-day !) is Ali Bey—so they say !  
Proud he is ! I do not dare. Would he care, he to  
wear

Any flower that buds or blows ? . . . save the rose, I  
suppose !

No ! rest there, and despair ! Live or die ! Thou and I  
Have no chance to catch one glance from his eye,  
passing by.

**XXIII.****PLUCKING A FLOWER.**

*He.* O maiden, vermeil rose !  
Unplanted, unsown,  
Blooming alone  
As the wild-flower blows,  
With a will of thine own !  
Neither grafted nor grown,  
Neither gather'd nor blown,  
O maiden, O rose !  
Blooming alone  
In the green garden-close,  
Unnoticed, unknown,  
Unpropt, unsupported,  
Unwater'd, unfed,  
Unkist, and uncourted,  
Unwoo'd, and unwed,

O sweet wild rose,  
Who knows ? Who knows ?  
Might I kiss thee, and court thee ?  
My kiss would not hurt thee !  
  
O sweet, sweet rose,  
In the green garden-close,  
If a gate were undone,  
And if I might come to thee,  
And meet thee alone ?  
  
Sue thee, and woo thee,  
And make thee my own ?  
Clasp thee, and cull thee,—what harm would be  
done ?

*She.* Beside thy field my garden blows.

Wore a gate in the garden left open . . . who  
knows ?  
And I water'd my garden at eventide?  
(Who knows ?)  
And if somebody silently happen'd to ride  
That way ? And a horse to the gate should be  
tied ?

And if somebody (who knows who ?), unespied,  
Were to enter my garden to gather a rose ?  
Who knows ? . . . I suppose  
No harm need be done. My belovèd one,  
Come lightly, come softly, at set of the sun !  
Come, and caress me !  
Kiss me, and press me !  
Fold me, and hold me !  
Kiss me with kisses that leave not a trace,  
But set not the print of thy teeth on my face,  
Or my mother will see it, and scold me.

## XXIV.

## TRANSPLANTING A FLOWER.

O maiden, mother's golden treasure !  
Purest gold of perfect pleasure !  
Do they beat thee, and ill-treat thee,  
That I meet thee all alone ?  
Do they beat thee, that I meet thee  
All too often, all too late,  
After nightfall, at the gate  
Of the garden, all alone ?  
Tell me, tell me, little one,  
Do they do it ? If I knew it,  
They should rue it ! I would come  
Oftener, later, yet again,  
(Hail, or snow, or wind, or rain !)  
Oftener, later ! Nor in vain :  
For if mother, for my sake,  
Were to drive thee out of home,

Just three little steps 'twould take  
(Think upon it, little one !)—  
Just three little steps, or four,  
To my door from mother's door.  
Love is wise. I say no more.  
Ponder on it, little one !

## XXV.

## A MESSAGE.

Sweet sister of my loved, unloving one,  
Kiss thy wild brother, kiss him tenderly !  
Ask him what is it, witless, I have done  
That he should look so coldly upon me ?  
Ah, well . . . I know he recks not ! Let it be.  
Yet say . . . "There's many a woodland nodding yet  
For who needs wood when winter nights be cold."  
Say . . . "Love to give finds ever love to get.  
There lack not goldsmiths where there lacks not gold.  
The wood will claim the woodman by-and-by ;  
The gold (be sure !) the goldsmith cannot miss ;  
Each maid to win finds lads to woo : and I . . ."  
Well, child, but only tell him, tell him this !  
Sweet sister, tell him this !

## XXVI.

## ISOLATION.

The night is very dark and very lonely :  
And as dark, and all as lonely, is my heart :  
And the sorrow that is in it night knows only :  
For the dawn breaks, and my heart breaks. Far apart  
From my old self seems my new self. And my mother  
And my sister are in heaven,—so they say :  
And the dear one dearer yet than any other  
Is far, far away.  
The sweet hour of his coming . . . night is falling !  
The hour of our awakening . . . bird on bough !  
The hour of last embraces . . . friends are calling  
“Love, farewell !” . . . and every hour is silent  
now.

## XXVII.

## A REGRET.

Lost empire of my maidenhood !  
Could I be once more what I would,  
Then what I am I would not be.  
Ah well-a-day, and woe is me !  
Could I a maiden be once more,  
And unknow all that I have known,  
And feel as I have felt of yore,  
I would not change with any queen ;  
Not for sceptre, crown, or throne,  
If I could be what I have been  
Would I grow what I have grown.

Lost empire of my maidenhood !  
Sweetest sweet ! and chiefest good !  
Now that thou art gone, I know,

Could I call thee back again,  
How to keep thee. Even so !  
Loss is all my gain !

Would that I were with the flocks  
As of old among the rocks !  
For the flocks do blithely bleat,  
And the mountain airs blow sweet,  
And the river runneth fleet,  
Running to the happy sea :  
But the glory of the river,  
And the gladness of the flocks,  
And the mirth among the rocks,  
And the music on the wind  
Ministrant to a merry mind,  
These are joyous things, for ever  
Dead, or fled, for me !

On the wind there moans for ever  
One word only, which the river,  
Murmuring, murmurs to the shore,  
And the flocks, with chilly bleat,

Evermore that word repeat,  
And that word is—Nevermore !  
Nevermore, O never, never  
Any more, by mount or river,  
Shall I be as I have been,  
A mountain maid, a virgin queen !

## XXVIII.

## THE BAN OF VARADIN.

A wassailer in wildest ways,  
But foul befal the churl who says  
That what he drinks he never pays,  
So mad a devil dwells within  
The brain of Peter Doitchin,  
The burly Ban of Varadin !\*

Three hundred ducats in a day  
Good sooth, he swill'd them all away !  
And, when he had no more to pay,  
First his massy mace of gold,  
Then his coal-black horse he sold.  
“ Fill up the can, keep out the cold, .  
And let the merry devil in,  
Sweetheart !” laugh't Peter Doitchin,  
The burly Ban of Varadin !

\* Servian name for Petervardein, fortress in Hungary.

Quoth King Mathias\* . . . “ Burly Ban,  
God curse thee for a brainless man,  
Whose goods flow from him in the can !  
Three hundred ducats in a day,  
Thou hast swill’d them all away,  
And, for lack of more to pay,  
Thou thy massy mace of gold,  
And thy coal-black war-steed bold,  
For a sorry stoup hast sold.”

“ King Mathias, cease thy prattle !  
Brainless heads are hard in battle :  
Fighting men make thirsty cattle.  
Had’st thou the tavern drain’d with me,  
The tavern wench upon thy knee,  
(So sweet and sound a wench is she !)  
Thou would’st have drunk up thy good town  
Of Pesth, with Buda tower and down,  
Camp, acropolis, court, and crown !”

\* Probably Mathias Corvinus.

XXIX.

## FATIMA AND MEHMED.

Beneath a milk-white almond tree,  
Fatima and Mehmed be.  
The black earth is their bridal bed ;  
The thick-starrèd sky clear-spread  
Is their coverlet all the night,  
As they lie in each other's arms so white.  
The grass is full of honey-dew ;  
The crescent moon, that glimmers through  
The unrippled leaves, is faint and new :  
And the milk-white almond blossoms  
All night long fall on their bosoms.

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